

Lesbian is candidate to be next Episcopal bishop of Chicago: Chicago diocese

by [John Dart](#) in the [September 18, 2007](#) issue

The Episcopal Church's struggle with the worldwide Anglican Communion over homosexuality and biblical interpretation took another turn just before the Labor Day weekend with news that one of five clergy nominated to be the next Episcopal bishop of Chicago is Tracey Lind, the dean of Cleveland's Trinity Cathedral and a lesbian who speaks of life with her partner, Emily Ingalls, as "the gift that most sustains me."

Since the 2003 Episcopal General Convention consented to the election in New Hampshire of Bishop V. Gene Robinson, who was open about his male partner, turmoil and schism threats have roiled the Anglican world.

Top Anglican bishops, meeting in Africa last February, called upon the U.S. bishops to state by September 30 that they would neither consent to the election of gay bishops nor authorize same-sex union rites.

Episcopal presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, on returning from the Tanzania meeting, urged the 2.2-million-member denomination to refrain "for a season" from those actions that provoke many Episcopal leaders in the global south. Jefferts Schori, though a supporter of gay rights and Robinson's election, had hoped that by exercising restraint the U.S. church might be better positioned to negotiate an accord with Anglican leaders.

However, most Episcopal bishops and leaders have since rejected the ultimatum, noting for one thing that the U.S. House of Bishops does not act alone on major matters, but rather acts together with the lay and clergy House of Deputies in triennial conventions.

The Chicago diocese's standing committee announced August 28 the slate of five nominees—two men and three women—to succeed William Persell, bishop of Chicago since 1999. Other nominations could be made until September 11, and the election will be held November 10.

"I am impressed with the quality of the nominees they have put forward," said Persell in a statement. The other four are Jane S. Gould, rector of St. Stephen's Memorial Episcopal Church, Lynn, Massachusetts; Jeffrey D. Lee, rector of St. Thomas Church, Medina, Washington; Margaret R. Rose, director of women's ministries for the Episcopal Church; and Timothy B. Safford, rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia.

Jim Robb, media spokesperson for the conservative Convocation of Anglicans in North America, which is supported by Archbishop Peter J. Akinola of Nigeria, said August 28 that he had no comment to make at this stage.

Favorable reaction came quickly from Susan Russell, the president of Integrity, the advocacy group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Episcopalians. "The inclusion of the Very Reverend Tracey Lind on the list of five extraordinarily qualified candidates for the bishop of Chicago is a bold step forward and a sign of hope and encouragement not only to LGBT Episcopalians but the whole church," said Russell, who is on the clergy staff at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California.

Russell said that a resolution adopted by the 2006 General Convention to forestall the election of a gay or lesbian bishop "has failed in its attempt to balance the unity of the Anglican Communion on the backs of the LGBT faithful."

All five nominees issued short statements posted on the Diocese of Chicago's Web site. Lind's statement said in part: "My call to proclaim God's justice, love and mercy for all creation has led me to spend 20 years strengthening and sustaining urban and suburban congregations." She also referred to experiences in community planning, organizational development and nonprofit leadership.

Whoever is elected the new Chicago bishop would have to be approved by a majority of standing committees and bishops of other dioceses in order to take office on February 2, 2008. *-John Dart*